

Human Learning favorable to true Religion : But the
Transcendental Theory hostile to the
Christian Revelation.

AN

A D D R E S S ,

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE SOCIETY OF Φ . B. K.

IN

BOWDOIN COLLEGE, *Me.*

SEPTEMBER 2, 1841.

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**BY ALDEN BRADFORD, LL. D.**

A MEMBER OF THE FIRST BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THAT SEMINARY.  
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# A D D R E S S .

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PERHAPS, I am singular in the opinion, but I have always thought that the subject of politics was inappropriate to occasions like the present. For, though it is highly important to the people of a Republic, and may often be profitably discussed both before the learned and the unlearned, there is so much danger of yielding to party feelings and biasses, that it becomes more than questionable, whether its introduction into literary societies is ever of great utility : while before a society and an audience which I am now to address, at a time too, when the friends of religion and literature have assembled to advance the interests of these so pre-eminently important objects, I feel that it will be a more appropriate and a more acceptable course to speak of the benefits of human learning, and of its connection with and aid in support of revelation.

I am the more confident in this opinion, from the reflection that the ancient founders of the first College in New England, two hundred years ago, and the friends and benefactors of this rising seminary were deeply sensible of the benefits which would result from human learning to the cause of pure Christianity. They did not admit that ignorance was the parent of devotion ; or that it was dangerous to enlighten the people by a free use of the sacred Scriptures. On the contrary, they expressly recognized their obligations to provide for a learned clergy, as well as for

common schools, for the whole body of the people. The founders of Bowdoin College declared their opinion that the prevalence of knowledge and science would be favorable to the virtue of the people, and the welfare of the State; and our Association, gentlemen of the *Φ. B. K.* was formed principally, for the purpose of aiding the progress and extending the benefits of sound learning; and that, with an ultimate view to the promotion of correct morals and true religion. Of what avail indeed, are all our literary labors or acquirements, if they do not render us more useful members of society, if they do not induce us to minister more effectually to the permanent welfare and improvement of our fellow men? Learning is intrinsically far more valuable than wealth; but if it be acquired only for fame or display, it is comparatively of little value. Then only is it deserving of high estimation, when it contributes to the general sum of human virtue and happiness: and it may well be required of all those who have received a liberal education to consecrate their acquired power and influence to the highest and best interests,—the intellectual and moral elevation of mankind.

It has been often and justly said that the Christian religion is favorable to the interests of human learning. Its spirit is liberal and free; and, unlike all other religious systems which have been taught or proposed to mankind, it rather invites than repels a full examination. It does not fear the light—it seeks not to shroud itself in darkness or mystery. One of its ablest and most zealous advocates expressed its true spirit when he said, “I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.”

This peculiar feature of our holy religion has been lost, indeed, or greatly obscured in some ages, and by some portions of the Christian Church. Unnatural and unjust interpretations have been put on the evangelical writings;



irrational and fanciful opinions have sometimes prevailed ; and the dark curtain of mystery has been frequently used to cover the absurd notions which fallible men have presumptuously added to the inspired code. When reason remonstrated, and common sense revolted, an unfounded dogma has still long held a place in the vulgar creed, by the pretence that it was a sacred mystery, not to be investigated or judged by the human understanding ; and yet the mysterious dogma was but the vain figment of speculative men.

But this was evidently a great perversion of the true spirit of Christianity, and it has generally been acknowledged for three hundred years past, and since the protestant reformation, that the Christian system was to be examined by the light of reason, the original revelation given to all men, and that the interpretations and inference, resting only on human authority which are clearly absurd or irrational, might justly be rejected. But this, it is important to observe, has reference not to doctrines merely incomprehensible, but to the traditions and corruptions of speculative individuals to secure their own personal authority, or to such as owe their origin to ignorance and superstition. Since the era of the reformation, a spirit of free inquiry has sprung up and been generally encouraged ; so that the cause of science and literature has greatly advanced, having no longer, in some parts of christendom, the weight of human authority to suppress or obstruct it ; and it must be admitted by every one well versed in ecclesiastical history for three hundred years past, that Christianity has thus shed an auspicious influence on human learning.

The converse of this proposition is equally true and important—that human learning affords support to true religion, and has indeed paid or is paying the debt, in part at least, which it owes to the liberal spirit of Christianity.

This position, I propose now to support and illustrate—The Christian religion is in some respects, I say not wholly nor chiefly, indebted to human learning for its support in the world, especially for the three last centuries. I desire that it may be distinctly understood, that it is with reference chiefly to the corruptions or perversions of the original Christian doctrines by ignorant or worldly men, that I shall attempt to support this proposition. For every true believer admits that Christianity was established at first and early prevailed by the aid of miracles, or the display of supernatural power, by which it was accompanied.

That I may not be misapprehended, let me also observe, in the outset, that it is not my purpose to present a *formal* and *full* statement of the evidence of the divine origin of Christianity, though in the prosecution of my object, I shall be led to refer to many of the arguments in its favor: and I would further state, that as the Gospel stands, not in human wisdom, but in divine power, it is not intended to assert, that God may not dispense with human learning, and with all human means and help whatever, in preserving and extending Christianity in the world. And lastly, I disclaim all intention of asserting, that great advances in human learning or philosophy are necessary to a true and saving faith in the Gospel—Oh, no. I rejoice to know and to have often witnessed the consoling and sanctifying power of Christianity in many a humble individual, favored with scarcely a glimmering ray from the light of human science and philosophy—With these explanations and qualifications of the proposition above stated, I shall now give it my feeble advocacy; and thus attempt to show the importance and the benefits of human learning to the cause of religion. And I cannot doubt that this will be deemed a legitimate object proposed by the society, which I have now the honor to address.



At an early period, after miracles had ceased, there were several learned men in the Christian Church; who by their preaching and writings vindicated the claims of Christianity to a divine origin. Paul and Apollos may be named among the Jews. One great purpose, if not the chief, of the learned Apollos, was to show from the prophecies in the Jewish sacred books, that Jesus was the true Messiah. It is probable he referred also to the doctrines and miracles of Christ, as additional evidence. But his knowledge of the prophetic writings received by the Jewish nation, was of great benefit to him in convincing both Jews and heathen. The learning of St. Paul was also useful to him, in making converts to Christianity, from among his own countrymen—while at the same time he exhibited supernatural power, in proof of his divine mission, alike to Jews and pagans. Of the Gentiles, Justin, Irenæus, Pantenus, Clement, and Origen of Alexandria, Minutius Felix, and others, men of great learning; all these wrote able apologies for the Christian religion, which served to bring many into the fold of Christ from the pagan world. In the fourth and fifth centuries, there was a succession of learned teachers and writers in the Church, to sustain it when attacked either by skeptics, atheists, or polytheists. One of these, Eusebius, a man of extensive and various learning; to whom might be justly added Chrysostom, Jerome, and others, who showed the general agreement of the Christian doctrines with the reasons and hopes of man; the probability that whatever of correct notions, views and opinions, the early Jewish patriarchs had were derived from special divine communications—the great deficiency of natural religion; the numerous errors in human systems of philosophy; and pointed out the difference between the real miracles of the author of Christianity, and the pretended ones of heathen magicians. Schools were also early established by Christians, to prepare young men, by hu-

man learning, to be teachers of the common people; and to present, on proper occasions, the various arguments and evidences of the divine origin of Christianity. And thus was human learning, one of the means, in providence, of preserving a knowledge of evangelical truth among men, for many centuries; although great darkness and gross errors prevailed, and served to prevent in a lamentable degree the benign and salutary influence of the Gospel.

Human learning, as you well know, was of incalculable benefit in detecting the errors of papacy, and in producing the protestant reformation, in the early part of the sixteenth century. And without its powerful aid, as miracles were then unknown, it would not have advanced, or been sustained against the arts, the menaces, the power and the persecutions of the existing hierarchy.

When the protestant reformation began on the continent of Europe in 1520, a large portion of christendom might be justly described, not only as extremely ignorant, but as either superstitious or skeptical. Many of the public men of that period, and for several previous ages, were undistinguished infidels. Not discriminating, as they ought, between the doctrines of the New Testament—which indeed, they were seldom allowed to read—and the rites or dogmas of the Church; and concluding, through unjustifiable indolence or indifference, that the politico-ecclesiastical system of the State was the true religion of Christ, they became disgusted, both with its tenets and its rites; they condemned or ridiculed the whole Christian system, as the ingenious invention of man; and were wandering in the dark mazes of infidelity and atheism. To all human apprehension, Christianity was in danger of being wholly subverted, or of becoming a cover to the greatest errors and crimes—To exist only in name; while its spirit was unknown, and its hopes generally extinguished. At this



critical period, human learning was most important for the elucidation and support of Christian truth, by shewing, that those parts of the state religion, which were repudiated or ridiculed by the skeptical, as irrational, were not the doctrines of the divine Master, but the devices of erring and selfish priests or princes; while the truths and precepts of Christ were shown to be alike reasonable, and highly favorable to the virtue and happiness of mankind.

The *boldness and zeal* of such characters as Luther were certainly useful in arousing the people from the moral lethargy of the times, and in effecting a glorious religious reformation in the Christian Church. For so gross were the abuses, so corrupt the doctrines, so revolting some of the tenets of the popular system, that it required but the exercise of common sense and reason in the people, and a plain statement of evangelical truths, as revealed in the gospel, to produce the conviction, that the prevailing religion was a great perversion of the original revelation, and that a radical reform was necessary in the *nominal* Church of Christ. But extensive learning was also requisite to render the reformation effectual and permanent. The skeptical philosopher was to be refuted; those who contended for the traditions and usages of the Church of long standing were to be shown the human origin of such traditions and rites; how and by whom they were introduced; the advocates for the Pope's supremacy and infallibility were to learn that they had no foundation in the Gospel, and no authority from Christ; and worldly politicians to be convinced of the difference between a mere state religion, and the heavenly truths revealed by the Son of God. All this could be done only by the studious and the learned, who had carefully perused the New Testament and the records of past ages, even from the first introduction of Christianity: such only could show how the Romish hierarchy, as it was in 1500, began,

advanced, acquired both spiritual and worldly influence, and converted the Church of Christ into a system of political and worldly power, and made it an instrument of oppression, of error, of deception, of moral corruption, such as the pagan, idolatrous world had never surpassed. The zeal of the protestant reformers did much ; but their learning did more. It first opened the eyes of the people to the monstrous errors and abuses which existed, and led them to perceive that the religion of 1520, was altogether of a different character from that taught by the Divine Master, and from that of the Church in the first and second centuries. Most evident is it that the Christian world would have been far less enlightened and less moral than it now is, but for the efforts of learned men in the Church, in the 16th and 17th centuries. The learned Erasmus, who preceded Luther a few years, timid and temporising as he was, even he rendered great service to the cause of Christian truth, by pointing out the errors and corruptions of the prevailing system, and exposing the evils and abuses, which then existed with the sanction of the papal hierarchy ; and thus prepared the people to throw off the yoke of ecclesiastical and spiritual thralldom. He had studied the gospels in the original, and perused the writings of the Christian fathers ; and was therefore able to detect the gross perversions which had been made of the doctrines, first delivered by the heavenly Teacher and his inspired apostles.

As the state of the Church then was, when, in the apprehension of worldly men, the foundations of Christianity were shaken, the labors of the faithful and learned Christian were of incalculable benefit, in separating evangelical truth from human traditions and glosses ; and in clearly discriminating between the doctrines of revelation and the commandments of men. For only a small part of mankind usually discriminate as reason and truth require.



When so much of the existing system of Christianity was shown to be merely of human authority and of human imposition, the faith of some was shaken in all religion, and there was danger that infidelity would extensively prevail. Unhappily it did prevail to an alarming degree during the 16th and 17th centuries, in every nation of Europe. But the friends of Christianity were not inactive. The time and talents of learned men in the Church were devoted to the defence of our holy religion. And to prepare for the task, many gave themselves to the study of ancient history both sacred and common. The stores of human learning were thus vastly increased for two centuries; and the result is well known to have been highly auspicious to the cause of Christian truth and virtue. Indeed, the influence of literature, and of the liberal spirit of protestantism were mutually beneficial. "Many ran to and fro," without hindrance or fear, "and knowledge was increased." And as human learning advanced, so also, almost *pari passu* was the advancement of pure and rational religion. Accordingly, it may be asserted with truth, that though infidelity prevailed for several centuries before, and more than one after the protestant reformation began, there is probably now far less in the nations of Europe, than at most former periods.

In the latter half of the 16th century, during the reign of Elizabeth of England, the efforts of learned men gave an able support to the cause of Christian truth, though not with entire success, in opposition to the worldly and political influence then exerted. The work of religious reformation in our father-land, it must be admitted, was but partially effected in the time of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth. It is true a secession took place from the Church of Rome; but the religious system remained almost wholly unchanged. It was as much of a political and worldly char-

acter, as under the Pope. But the non-conformists and puritans were very numerous ; and, at one period, probably, the *majority* in the kingdom : And the true interests of the Church were supported by the most learned men of the age. When a convocation of the clergy was held, in 1563, under Elizabeth, there was only *one* majority for retaining the vain ceremonies of former times ; and this by means of the votes by proxy. But the cause of reform, so as to assimilate the Church to primitive and apostolic times, was ably maintained by a host of learned men, who must have entirely succeeded, if it had been possible to prevail against worldly power and policy. In that noble company of confessors, who contended for a more correct government and discipline, and for a purer and more simple form of worship, in the Christian Church, there was a bright constellation of learned scholars, never outshone in any age of the world. And if they were unable to effect a reformation in a national view, they accomplished so much in defence of the divine origin of Christianity against the attacks of infidelity, and in favor of purity of worship against temporising politicians, that every succeeding age has cause to rejoice in the fruits of their faithful labors. Especially, have the people of New England abundant reason for deep and lasting gratitude to them, for the enjoyment of spiritual privileges, and religious liberty, in which no other portion of christendom has ever so richly participated.

During the reign of the Stuarts, in the 17th century, infidelity assumed a bold and menacing attitude. It was deemed sufficient by the court, to have the external forms of religion. The unprincipled politicians, who governed Charles I. and II. like Gallio of old, cared not for any religious system, further than it would serve as an engine of the State, to awe and restrain the common people. The courtiers were professed infidels, or shameless hypocrites :



And licentiousness prevailed in the higher classes, to an unusual and alarming degree. An urgent occasion was thus presented for the efforts of the learned and the faithful in the Church, to lift up a standard against the errors and degeneracy of the times. And their labors were highly important and salutary in the cause of Christian truth and moral virtue. Though the nation was flooded with skeptical and irreligious writings, abundant antidotes were prepared to counteract the growing poison. Expositions of the Gospel, and evidences of the truth of the evangelical history were given to the public, by the learned divines and laymen of that period; and the citadel of Christianity remained unmoved and uninjured from the assaults of its enemies. Of these able apologists and defenders it is sufficient to name a Grotius, a Milton, a Locke, a Newton, and a Boyle. What God could or might have wrought in support of his own cause, by other means, it does not become us to speak in positive or decisive terms—but so far as man can judge, it was by the efforts of learned Christians, that the dangerous spirit of infidelity was effectually checked, and the genuine doctrines of our holy religion preserved; in a good degree in their primitive purity.

A recollection of these striking facts did not fail to convince intelligent Christians of the times to which I have referred, and of subsequent periods, of the benefit of human learning, in explaining and defending Christianity in the world; and to produce a high estimation of its use in advancing the cause of true religion among mankind. And no class of men in England cultivated ancient literature with more ardor or assiduity than the puritan reformers, in the latter part of the 16th and in the 17th centuries.

The same mind was also in our puritan fathers, the first and early settlers of this part of America. They duly appreciated the influence of human learning in defence

and for the preservation of Christianity, in all its primitive purity and simplicity. Among them, even from their first immigration, there was as large a portion of literary characters according to the number of the company, as among those who remained in the parent country. And how early and anxious, and liberal they were in founding a College, and thus providing means for a learned ministry, is known to you all. Six years after the first settlement of Massachusetts, with all their personal wants and privations, they founded Harvard College—dedicated it to Christ and the Church—and for the accomplishment of that most important object, there prepared for the training of young men in all good learning; “who would be able to teach and defend the blessed truths of the Gospel, when the elder ministers, who had fled from England, through their attachment to pure and uncorrupt Christianity, should be laid in their graves”—“Being well aware,” as one of them emphatically declared, “that it was the device of Satan to persuade men that human learning and an acquaintance with the ancient languages were unnecessary; just as he had formerly, in the Romish church, locked up from the people, all knowledge of the scriptures; and taught them that ignorance was the mother of devotion.”

The intelligent friends of true religion, and of primitive Christianity, can never then, wisely or consistently impugn the position, which I have here taken, and would endeavor to fortify and support. The mere politician, the advocate of religion only for worldly purposes, the aspiring hierarch who seeks chiefly for power and wealth—these may dispense with the helps to be derived from human learning; for it is unimportant with them, whether religion be true or false; whether Christianity be of divine or human origin. And the ignorant fanatic may also esteem human learning of no account, in the elucidation of its doctrines, or for its main-



tenance in the world. But every true protestant, every sincere disciple of the puritan school of dissenters, of 1580; every one who would be ready to give a reason for his hope and faith in the Gospel—must perceive the necessity of having learned men in the Christian Ministry, who are able not only teach others correctly, but who have sufficient knowledge “to convince gainsayers, and to put to silence the specious arguments of ignorant and foolish men.”

It is impossible fully to estimate the benefits derived to our holy religion, by the labors of Christian scholars, during even the two last centuries in England, when such men as Herbert Earl of Cherbury, Hobbes, Bolingbroke, and Hume, were endeavoring to undermine the foundations of our faith, and to reduce Christianity to a level with the ~~superior~~ systems existing in some parts of the world, which are evidently the device of human presumption or pride. The divine authority of Christianity was boldly impugned; and mankind were exposed to universal Pyrrhonism. But the faithful and able watchmen, who were *set for the defence of the Gospel*, and other learned men of a religious character opposed the threatening storm, and conducted the fearful lightning harmlessly to the earth. Historical facts proving the authenticity of the Christian records, both incidental and direct, were collected and presented, and co-incidences brought to view, which had before escaped formal notice or consideration; affording accumulated evidences, which formed an amount of proof not to be destroyed or evaded by any efforts of modern skepticism. Among the numerous learned apologists for the Christian faith in modern times, may be found in England, a Lardner, a Leland, a Watson, and a Paley: And in this country, a Belknap, a Dwight, a Clarke, a Norton; and last, but not least, an Adams; who is no less to be honored for his learn-

ed testimony in support of revelation and of the sacred records of the Bible, than for his vast political knowledge ; and whose absence, as your chosen orator on this occasion, we all deeply regret.

The objections to revealed religion, offered by the skeptical and superficial, generally relate to the sufficiency of reason as a guide in religion ; to alleged chronological discrepancies ; to the want of a more clear and direct application of prophecies, asserted by Christians to have been fulfilled ; to the fact that there are other claims to inspiration, and to apparent contradictions in the sacred volume. Difficulties have been thus raised, creating doubts, not easily removed by persons of only common learning, who have felt the need of assistance and of further light from the Christian scholar, to give them satisfaction. And the learned have been able, in a great measure, to answer such objections—to point out the defects and errors of all human systems—to show the evidences of the accomplishment of previous prophetic descriptions, in various instances ; to clear up difficulties in different chronological statements ; to give a full account of the customs and manners of the ancient Jews, and of the nations with which they were connected : thus affording evidence of the real occurrence of the events stated, and the early date of the sacred records ; and to reconcile seemingly contradictory passages in the Bible, by referring to the original languages, to the different views and opinions of the writers, and to the peculiar style and phraseology of each. What great benefits have been thus conferred on the cause of true religion, and what high satisfaction given to the humble Christian, in the reception of the Gospel, by biblical scholars, and by means of good learning, few in this enlightened age, can be ignorant. Nor is it easy to conceive



what degrees of ignorance and doubt and skepticism would have probably now prevailed, had these learned labors never been undertaken and performed.

But here I shall probably be met by the objection, that human learning sometimes leads to skepticism ; that at best it is often attended with error ; and that the cause of divine truth needs no support, and no aid from the labors of man. The qualifications of the proposition, which I advocate, already suggested, are perhaps a sufficient answer to this objection : but some additional remarks, on this point, may not be improper. It is not, indeed, very uncommon, that the superficial sciolist is skeptical ; or that he meets with difficulties and doubts, which he cannot at once explain or remove. But it will generally be found to be true, that greater advances in knowledge and more profound learning, will bring him back to a belief in revelation, and lead him to cherish a high reverence for the religion of the Bible. It is also admitted, that there have been some skeptics and infidels among the more learned. But they have been comparatively few ; and it is not infrequently the case, that they have been educated under influences most unfavorable to religion, both natural and revealed : And learned as they might be in the physical sciences, never examined into the nature and evidences of Christianity with sufficient care and fidelity to enable them to form a just decision. The astronomer Halley, who was cotemporary with Sir Isaac Newton, once suggested some objections to the Christian revelation ; when Newton, who knew he had given but little attention to the subject, and had not carefully studied the controversy between believers and infidels, observed, “ Dr. Halley, I always hear your opinion with pleasure, on subjects of astronomy and of physics generally, but you will allow me to say that you are not qualified to give an opinion of the claims of Chris-

tianity to be of divine origin, for you have never thoroughly studied the subject."

We have the testimony of many individuals, who opened the Bible, and first came to the examination of the Christian religion, with unhappy prejudices and doubts, but who after full and candid inquiry, have become intelligent and firm believers; and of others, whose faith had been shaken by the plausible objections of ingenious sophists, who on a careful perusal of the defences and apologies written by the learned, were fully persuaded of the divine origin of Christianity. It is, however, too true, that in some past ages, many in the learned professions were infidels, or only nominal professors. I do not contend that human learning necessarily and invariably leads men to faith in the Gospel; nor that *all* great philosophers have given their support to the Christian religion. But this fact detracts not at all from the opinion advanced, that human learning has often and *usually* been the means under divine providence, of defending Christianity, and of preserving it in its purity in the world. It is not strange that some individuals, men of extensive knowledge in the physical sciences, or in profane history, and who were educated by men of infidel principles, or who were wholly indifferent to religion, should not duly estimate the Christian revelation; and should therefore withhold all efforts to support or recommend it in society. A different course is not to be expected of worldly men, or of those whose studies are particularly directed to natural philosophy; not infrequently, however, even among this class of studious men, we find that after careful examination and reflection, after a close attention to cause and effect, to the wonderful though uniform operation of the laws of nature, and the constant and universal evidence of intelligent design in the creation and preservation of the world, they have deliberately adopted the great doctrines of



natural religion, which usually conduct the candid mind to a grateful recognition of the Christian revelation. A celebrated materialist, whose mind had been long confined to the observation of natural causes and effects, was at last convinced of the existence of an infinite and intelligent Being who made, supported, and governed all things, and after much reflection and contemplation, with apparent sincerity exclaimed:

“A God, a God, the wide earth shouts,  
A God, the heavens reply,  
Who moulded in his palm the world,  
And hung it in the sky.”

Human philosophy too, while it has made *some* men vain, and seduced some into wandering mazes till they were lost in endless speculation and doubt, has served to convince many more of the infinite power and wisdom of the Deity; so that they have been prepared to acknowledge that all which is mysterious or incomprehensible is not to be rejected; and to embrace for truth what the voice of nature and revelation plainly teach, though above the ken of our limited understandings. And surely the finite cannot expect fully to comprehend the infinite. Indeed reason itself teaches us to anticipate difficulties and mysteries, both in the works and ways of the Deity. We cannot expect to understand and be able to explain all the proceedings and operations of the infinite one. There will be occasions for wonder, as well in the teachings as the works of the Almighty, after all our studies and inquiries. The most erudite philosophers have been ready to confess their ignorance of many things, and of the precise manner of the divine operations, both in the material and intellectual world. Surrounded with mysteries, we betake ourselves to philosophy, to investigate and to learn; but after close inquiry, aided by all the light of human science and philoso-

phy, we shall still have cause for wonder and astonishment—' *Θαυμαζοντες Φιλοσοφουμεν, Φιλοσοφεσαντες Θαμβουμεν.*' —Still true philosophy and sober reason may conduct us to many truths in morals, as well as in physics, and serve also to assist us in our inquiries as to the evidences of divine revelation. The latter is the foundation on which we must build; the former may be used as helps, and even as pillars to support the sacred temple.

But it may still be inquired if there is not danger to be apprehended from appeals to human wisdom and philosophy, even with these qualifications. May we not estimate the benefits of human learning and philosophy too highly? No doubt, human reason may be too much exalted, and human philosophy corrupted and perverted. Speculative men may indulge their feelings and imaginations too far, and pretend that their vain opinions are derived from divine breathings and communications. Such there have been in all ages of the world. But would it not be more just to say, that a few had substituted fancy for truth, and the merits of a wild imagination for the teachings of sound reason, than to condemn its use and authority generally, or repudiate its suggestions and conclusions in all cases? Reason is in some sense a divine gift; and was granted us for our enlightenment and guide. Yet it is limited in its powers, and is liable to be perverted or darkened by passion and prejudice, or by an improper education. And it should always be remembered that revelation is given as an unerring standard in religion and morals: to that therefore the appeal should be ultimately made, as of the highest authority.

There can be no danger to Christianity from the exercise of reason, considered as an *aid* to religion and morals; so long as it is not appealed to as an oracle, or a light to discover *all* truths on these subjects; nor made to super-



sedate the necessity of divine revelation. And it is chiefly by the help of reason, excepting indeed, a direct and miraculous testimony from heaven, that we must decide which is the true and which is the false religion, when different systems are offered us with this high pretension. Whether a Numa, or a Mahomet claim supernatural and divine illumination; or the Bishop of Rome assume infallibility because he sits in the chair of St. Peter; or an Ann Hutchinson boast of the personal indwelling of the Holy Ghost, thus pretending to be wiser than all her teachers were; or an Ann Leese, who taught that religious worship consisted in violent bodily motions, and that we must dance our way into the kingdom of heaven; or a Baron Swedenbourg, that, by immediate intercourse with celestial spirits, he had higher and better views of the heavenly state than the apostles ever gave; or the modern transcendental German doctors, who pretend to a consciousness, by which they arrive at all spiritual truths without any other means, and which is more certain and more perfect than the written word of God; and therefore that all supernatural revelation by Christ is useless; nay, worse than useless, as it has been contaminated or weakened by the human channels in which it has been conveyed to us—Judging of the validity of such systems and theories, we must resort to reason and learning as guides, or rather as assistants, under the controlling and infallible authority of divine revelation.

It may not then, be incorrect to say that the united authority of reason and revelation should be the test of religious truth; and that all new theories or systems of human philosophy on subjects of ethics and theology should be approved or rejected only in so far as they shall be found to agree, or not to be in opposition to the plain doctrines of revelation.

Be it then kept in mind that it is sound learning found-

ed in real knowledge, and in facts collected from a strict authentic history, which can be permanently useful and salutary; and therefore be entitled to the value and commendation we bestow upon it; while mere scholastic learning, which is of a mystical or hypercritical character, which consists chiefly in ingenious subtleties and verbal distinctions without meaning, may well be suffered to remain under the neglect and contempt with which common sense has long treated it. It has been said of the philosophy of Aristotle, "that it was like a barren tree, which concealed its want of fruit, by a profusion of leaves." The disciples of that learned and ingenious Greek made his metaphysical system far more subtle and unintelligible than their master; as the pupils of some modern speculative metaphysicians have had the merit, such as it is, of rendering the obscurities of their teachers far more palpable than they appear in their own writings. The original authors only approached the shadowy regions of hypothesis and conjecture. Some of their followers have entirely lost themselves in the dark labyrinths of doubt and infidelity, with no other guide than individual feeling; thus rashly and unreasonably rejecting all supernatural revelation. Some speculative men have denied the existence of matter; and some, that of mind or spirit; and if their visionary and irrational theories were adopted, we should recognize nothing—absolutely nothing—neither matter nor spirit. But, despite the speculations and dreams of a few visionary and contemplative individuals who have appeared in the world, we may confidently assert, that the great majority of mankind, who retain their reason and justly interpret the language of creation and providence, will continue to believe in a material universe, the handy work of the Almighty; as it demonstrates his power, wisdom and beneficence; and in an immaterial or spiritual principle in



man, given him by the infinite, eternal mind, yet distinct from its author, and possessed of all the attributes of personal individuality. They will still believe, and have cause or evidence for believing, "that, when the dust returns to the earth, the spirit will return to God who gave it;" and that a strict, though just retribution awaits every rational being.

Our consciousness, of which we are certain, if we can be certain of any thing, has been generally admitted to prove an infinite mind, as the author of this conscious principle within. It is no idle assertion, to say with Descartes, "that I think, therefore I exist; and that, if I exist, there is an Author of my being."

But some men of the present age have grown so wise, and made such rare discoveries in the intellectual or spiritual world, that though they admit the principle or faculty of consciousness, they are ready to conclude, that this is God; or that no other distinct Deity exists. They know and need no intellect of greater power or authority than their own. And if their mind be a part of God, they may be right in their opinion—and thus they claim in effect the attribute of eternity and self-existence—or at least, on their premises they recognize no separate existence from the eternal, uncreated mind.

A portion of the illuminated adepts in modern anti-supernatural philosophy find themselves possessed as they say, of sufficient internal light and knowledge, so that they need no supernatural instructions, and no miraculous manifestations of divine power, in support of Christianity. But are they aware that, on this theory, there would be no standard of divine truth, and that the Church of Christ would be more confounded than the builders of Babel of old. Every one would have a doctrine, a theory, a system of his own, and the revealed word, which alone can give a

certain sound, would be misunderstood, or unheard or disregarded. If the doctrines taught by Christ, our divine Master, are of no authority and obligation any further than is derived from our own personal approval, or our natural consciousness of their necessary truth, then we may receive or repudiate them, as we do those of Socrates, of Plato and Epictetus; of Cicero or of Seneca. I believe in the high powers of the human mind; I have strong faith in the still greater development of the soul of man. I do not deny and would not undervalue the indulgence of a contemplative spirit, or of self-examination; as it may lead to a more correct and full conviction of our inherent mental powers. But I perceive no reason to admit that revelation is to be superseded in this life at least, by the knowledge and attainments of the greatest philosophers; or that the perception of fitness and adaptation in the Christian doctrines to the wants and desires of the human soul, can have so direct and commanding influence with mankind in general, as is derived from the manifestation of supernatural power. Nicodemus, the learned Jewish ruler, might have been a sincere inquirer after truth, and have even felt the power and force of the doctrines of Christ; but it was the performance of miraculous works which produced the conviction that God was with him.

And would it not be strange when the Deity has given a revelation for the moral benefit of the world, if he had given no divine sanctions to it, so as to demand the regard, the belief and the obedience of mankind? Has he spoken to us from heaven, and yet given no certain proof when and by whom he has spoken? Then are we in the same state of uncertainty and doubt, and left to search for religious truth equally with those who lived in ancient heathen lands, or are now seeking after God, and are anxious to learn his will, as to the destiny of mankind, and his moral



nature, whether he be propitious. Then we might be justified in subjecting the doctrines of Christ, as well as those of Socrates or Plato, to the test of our own individual perceptions and judgment; and in rejecting or regarding such as we did not fully understand, or of which we did not perceive the entire rationality.

It appears to be the nature and tendency of the transcendental philosophy of the present day, while it claims to be founded wholly in "the reason," and to be developed by the mind of man, that it is in a great degree unintelligible, and as it supposes it can be acquired only by a few extraordinary minds, or by extraordinary efforts and aspirations of mind; and what is a far greater objection, that it rejects the evidence of miracles—and thus places the Christian system on a level with all human theories, which have been proposed or known in the world. It expressly denies their necessity, or their importance; and therefore, by evident implication, impugns their reality. For unless they were necessary or highly important, as a sanction and a proof of the divine origin of Christianity, why should they have been performed as the real Christian admits? If the doctrines, revealed by the great Teacher, carried their own incontestable evidence to the mind of every one who heard them, as of divine origin, then indeed, the display of a supernatural power in the instructor might be unnecessary, as a proof that he spake by the authority of God. But no system of religion, however plausible and reasonable, will have controlling authority over mankind, with all their prejudices and passions, unless proved to be from heaven by indubitable miracles. Besides, to deny the supernatural works of Christ is to treat the evangelical record, in part at least, as fabulous and false. Who will consent to found his theological faith on the theory of Plato, of DesCartes, or of Liebnitz, or of Locke, or Reid, of Edwards, or Priestly, or

of any other celebrated metaphysicians? Their writings may well be consulted as able treatises on the mental powers, but they cannot be received as infallible oracles. Human reason and philosophy may give some just *intimations* concerning the natural powers of the mind, and the divine will and purpose as to the destiny of man: But revelation only can speak authoritatively on these high subjects. And to show their authority to speak in the name of Deity, its agents, or first teachers, must exhibit supernatural powers, as well as propose sound and reasonable doctrines. And miracles are necessary to give assurance that the teachers spake by divine revelation, or from supernatural communications.

Cousin, a French philosopher of the present day, supposes, "the illuminations of reason" to be inspiration. He might have said, that the instinct of all animals was also in some sense inspiration: For it is as unaccountable as the reason of man. But admit the opinion of the French philosopher, and place reason on a level with revelation, in some respects, or as far as the reason goes; even this will not disprove the benefit of supernatural communications; since the former does not reveal or teach all that is essential or important. An additional revelation may still be necessary, to teach truths of higher interest and import. And the Christian believes that revelation does disclose and teach truths—important and consoling truths—never discovered by human reason and philosophy.

Let us be admonished, then, of the necessity of caution and humility, in the exercise both of our imagination and our reason, as the sole means and sources of religious truth. If we submit entirely to their guidance, without a recognition of the supreme and controlling influence of revelation, we may fall into numerous and dangerous errors. But the same danger will not always nor often follow from a dili-



gent cultivation of human learning. This, indeed, is not to be made a substitute for revelation ; nor is it alone sufficient for the preservation of moral truth in the world. It is to be valued as a means of acquiring truth, by giving us a just understanding of the contents of the sacred volume, and a knowledge of the various opinions of wise and good men in past ages. In many instances, it will teach us the temporary and unhappy effects of ideal systems of philosophy engendered in the minds of speculative and visionary men in past ages. We may justly then, repeat our previous commendations of human learning : And, with the qualifications and concessions already made, we may justly assert its favorable influence on the cause of true religion.

To erroneous systems of theology, to religious creeds and establishments, the work of man's device, human reason and philosophy may be dangerous ; by detecting and exposing their false foundations or vain pretensions : while at the same time, it is true that with reason alone as a guide, we may be led to imbibe erroneous views in religion. But all knowledge, not rashly applied to support a theory, or to favor a sect, or to undermine Christian truth, by a hasty inference and without due examination.—All knowledge, not thus unjustly and partially applied, will be found auspicious to the interest of Christianity and of good morals. It is only a mistaken or partial view of the material world and of the course of providence, which will excite skeptical doubts and surmises ; while a more close and thorough investigation will show the analogy between the works and word of God. Human *learning* then, may be useful and important, as an aid to revelation ; while human *reason* and *philosophy*, rejecting whatever it does not fully comprehend, may be dangerous, as the *sole arbiter* or highest authority. The various aberrations of the human intel-

lect, in claiming to be the only guide and judge on spiritual subjects, may well dispose us not to rest ultimately on reason ; but the most correct and extensive learning, unless under the influence of a mind predisposed to error and skepticism, will be found a sure support to revelation.

When the infidel has asserted that revelation was unnecessary, and that reason was a sufficient guide to all important moral and religious truths, it has been shown by the learned Christian that the state of the heathen world was deplorably degraded and corrupt;—debased by superstition and sunk in the grossest vices, and that revelation was necessary to enlighten, direct and reform mankind ; as the greatest efforts of reason, for ages, had not given satisfactory information on the subject of theology—When it has been pretended that Christianity was contrary to reason or to the common apprehensions of mankind, it has been shown, that though some of its doctrines are above our full comprehension, and such as reason had not discovered, they approve themselves to the purest sentiments of the human mind, and are honorary also to the divine character. When the unbeliever has objected to the authenticity of the Mosaic history, as to the creation of the world or the general deluge, it has been made most manifest by the diligent student of antiquity, that the statements of the Jewish lawgiver were agreeable to and confirmed by the early condition of the world, so far as known, and by the most ancient records of profane writers. The belief in a deluge is extensive and almost universal: and the recent discoveries in geology, though sometimes supposed to contradict the historical account of Moses, bear testimony to the comparatively recent date of the present formation of the globe, and of a destructive catastrophe, in which the waters of the great deep were thrown up from the fathomless abyss.

There is not time for details—but two instances now oc-



cur to my mind—You are aware, that the Brahmins of India claim an antiquity for their nation far beyond the early period of our race, according to Moses, and that modern infidels have laid great stress on this, to destroy the credit given by Christians to the sacred history —But it is now, and has indeed been the settled opinion of learned men for the century past, that there is no satisfactory proof that this claim is well founded—Among others, Sir William Jones, a very learned Englishman, who resided some time in India, who perused their ancient records, and was in all respects well qualified to give a correct opinion on the subject, declared, that his faith in the Mosaic history was confirmed, and that there were no documents in proof of the events farther than about two thousand years before our era, which was the time of Abraham—who lived about three hundred years after the deluge, and was of the ninth generation from the patriarch Noah. The Chaldeans were probably the fathers of astronomy among the descendants of Noah—who no doubt communicated whatever knowledge the antediluvians had of that sublime science.

The other instance is the hypothesis of a skeptical French traveler into Italy near the close of the last century. He says it was found that nearly two thousand years intervened between an irruption from the Volcano of mount Etna, which cast up the lava, and the next of which there was any account, and there being seven of these strata of lava so cast out, he supposes—that the Volcano had existed for fourteen thousand years at least.—But we have authentic history, that since the time of Pliny in the year seventy of the Christian era, when a most remarkable irruption occurred, and buried a large city in ruins, the like number of strata of lava are to be found in that vicinity—which shows that seventeen hundred, instead of fourteen thousand years are sufficient to produce the phenomena, mentioned—And

thus the boasted and formidable argument of the French skeptical traveler, vanished at once, and left it quite probable that Moses was no forger of lies nor writer of romance.

When doubts have been suggested, as to the application and fulfilment of prophecies in the Christian Scriptures, it has been satisfactorily proved, that events occurred in many cases in strict conformity to the previous predictions; and that no human foresight could have made known or justly calculated on the event. When it is pretended that Christianity was propagated by worldly power and policy, or the selfish arts of individuals, it has been shown that it was preached and extended by the efforts of a few men, and in opposition to human passions, and to the authority, the threats and persecutions of the great men of the world; and that this extensive and rapid spread of the Gospel was owing in part and chiefly to the exhibition of a *miraculous power*; as fully proved and admitted as other parts of the evangelical history—When the infidel demands a repetition of miracles, so that with his own eyes he may see them performed, it has been justly replied, that he requires what is improper and unreasonable, and what would, indeed, militate with the proper idea of a miracle. For if every individual of every age must have a miracle wrought, who does not perceive, that this would be contrary to the definition of a miracle, or that its constancy and universality would disprove that it was such—When it has been said, that mistranslations and mistakes have been made in the Gospel, and other books of the New Testament, it has been fully proved, by the researches and labors of learned men; that there is no just ground for such a supposition, that there were numerous copies and versions, in the first, second and third cautions, and that no differences can be found of any importance; and that the comparison of many thousand copies, in different languages,



which have been collected and collated, furnish but very few, and these slight and chiefly verbal discrepancies. When the religion of Mohammed has been presented as a rival system to Christianity, it has been made fully to appear that in many of its doctrines it was irrational and absurd; that no miracles were wrought in its support; that its tenets serve to nourish the lusts and passions of men; that the character of its author was not pure nor undisguised; and that the early extension of his religion was wholly owing to the sword—When it has been pretended that miracles were performed at the tombs, and by the relics of popish priests, it has been made abundantly evident, that these were spurious and false, and without that publicity which was necessary to convince any honest and intelligent person. When the opposition and infidelity of the Jewish rulers, respecting the Messiah, have been stated as furnishing a doubt of the reality of his miracles or his resurrection; it has been justly replied, that they were interested to oppose and slander him; that their characters were such that we might expect they would oppose and disbelieve, or refuse to confess him; and that in several cases, where they could not deny the miracle as it was wrought in presence of large companies of people, they acknowledged that a miracle had been actually performed, as in the cure of the man born blind, the raising of Lazarus, the resurrection of our Lord, and the cure of the lame man in Solomon's porch by his apostles. When it has been supposed that false prophets have wrought miracles, and therefore that this kind of proof was not sufficient and valid in favor of Christ and his apostles—it has been satisfactorily shown, that such pretended miraculous works were the acts of Jugglers, and only apparently done by slight of hand, or resolvable into optical delusion—and that no real miracle has ever proved to have been wrought by

an impostor. When it has been said, that a revelation should be so plain, that all might understand and comprehend it without learned doctors and teachers; that it would have been written in the sky with the colors of a rainbow, that all might see and interpret, and judge without assistance, or the possibility of mistake, it has been justly observed, that there is no more mystery in revelation than in nature, or in creation and providence; that man cannot expect fully to comprehend all the divine ways and declarations; that as he is a moral being, it is proper he should have cause for inquiry, and for the formation of his faith; and that the important, purifying, consoling doctrines of the Gospel are plain—are repeated and expressed in various ways—so that the wayfaring man, however illiterate, may not err.

Considerations and recollections like these will not fail to show the utility of sound learning, and the important aid it affords to the cause of true religion? It is evidently of great benefit in defending historical Christianity, and in explaining the sacred truths of revelation. Reason, too, for we should distinguish between reason and learning—Reason is often a friendly assistant to the interests of true religion and sound morality. In many instances it will show the analogy of natural and revealed religion; and having separated the primitive and true from the false, or fictitious, tenets of professing Christians, it will demonstrate that the former, though incomprehensible, or beyond the human mind to discover, are not absurd nor improbable.

You will perceive that I make a distinction between sound learning and human reason or philosophy. And this I consider a just and important distinction. The former is concerned about *facts*; and its province is to give us a knowledge of events and theories of former periods, so



far as they are connected with the Christian revelation. The classical scholar, the biblical critic, the learned philologist, the student of archeology, the well-informed in ancient ecclesiastical records, in sacred and common history, and those who have carefully searched the physiological systems of ancient heathen philosophers—All these are qualified in some measure, to elucidate and defend the Christian religion; so as to give satisfaction to the humble and illiterate inquirer; to show the defects of reason in leading to religious truth; and to remove the objections which the skeptic may propose. But human *reason*, unaided and left wholly to its own conjectures, is not so sure a help, nor so confidently to be trusted and followed. For it may yield to mere speculations, and become identified with vain philosophy, which seduces only to mislead, and suggests unfounded theories which cannot fail to injure. True philosophy implies a love of wisdom; and this desire will lead us often to the discovery of truth—And yet it is a historical fact, that visionary men frequently assume the name of philosophers, when they are less wise in the things of eternal life, than the humble believer in the common walks of society.

While therefore, true religion and the Christian revelation have nothing to fear from good learning, but on the contrary often derive benefit from it, in the removal of objections offered by the skeptical and the ignorant; in explaining the contents of the sacred records; and in collecting materials from common history in its support; it is still true, that the imaginations and conjectures of speculative men, under the name of *reason*, may and often do lead to fatal errors, and to systems at once licentious, and destructive to the future hopes of man.

Let me not be understood however, to intimate that religion and philosophy, or revelation and reason are neces-

sarily opposed to each other. The one is not the natural antagonist of the other. And there may be a reciprocally favorable influence between them. Sober reason and genuine philosophy should not be represented as inimical to true religion, or the Christian revelation. Nor can revelation be justly deemed opposed to sound reason and philosophy; though the light of the former adds much to that of the latter. But the province of each is distinct. Reason is our guide in judging in the common concerns of this world, of social life, of the duty of man as a member of society or a student of nature. Even more—we are to use the faculty of reason, in some measure, in interpreting the records of revelation, and in judging both of its evidences and its doctrines. But revelation rests in part on faith, and implies the supernatural—reason is not a competent and final judge on the subject, nor is it capable of teaching all that may be important for us to know in religion. The truths of revelation are beyond the highest efforts of human reason. The wisest and most studious men in the heathen world never discovered the great distinguished doctrines of revelation; the propitious nature, the paternal character of Deity; and that of immortality; and that of a just and full retribution hereafter. And these are the distinguished and fundamental truths of revealed religion. To say, that there none others, might be improper, and certainty is not required for my present purpose.

As a full authority for these essential religious doctrines, we must look to revelation alone; and we can clearly trace them only to that fountain of religious truth. Human reason has evidently been unable to teach and confirm them. Philosophy has not reached them, and could not assure us of them. To be assured that the Deity is propitious, and that immortality is to be the glorious inheritance of man, we must look to divine revelation; and there



only shall we find the sure doctrine of eternal life, and of the paternal character of God.

There may be danger, then, there certainly is danger, in exalting human reason too highly, or of proposing it as a *standard*, by which to judge and decide on the truth of revelation—and there is, at the present day especially, great danger of substituting human reason for divine revelation, and of rejecting the peculiar evidence of Christianity, as a divine system; with the pretence that no such evidence is necessary; and that the reason and consciousness of every individual are the only legitimate authority or proof. Now I contend, that great benefits may result to true religion from sound learning, and that reason also may be of use in interpreting the instructions of revelation, and yet deny that it is a sufficient guide in religion; or can be safely substituted for Christianity, as taught in the sacred records. It may allowed to be an *aid* to religion, without being made the *principal*. It may assist us in perceiving the propriety and obligations of the doctrines of revealed religion, but it is not the only nor chief authority on which it rests.

Here it is important, it is essential to discriminate—and for want of just discrimination on this subject, we shall be liable to err. You will permit me then, at the risk of repetition and of a heavy tax on your patience to observe, that the skeptical philosopher, and the advocate for human reason, as the only guide and judge in religion, and who thus reject the binding and decisive authority of revelation, have no assurance of any thing permanent or certain on the subject, and no strong foundation for their faith, whatever it may be; and if all with them be not doubtful, the obligations to believe Christianity are by them supposed to depend wholly on our individual perceptions of their truth and fitness. We admit, that Christian faith is not demon-

stration: but it is built on divine authority, as well as on the fitness of the things believed.

Properly, the inquiry is, whether besides reason the Deity has favored the world with a revelation of his will and purposes respecting mankind, for their belief and guidance. With the Christian indeed, this is not a question; he has no doubt on the subject. And therefore, it becomes his reasonable duty to receive and obey it. He may not set up his feeble vision against such superior light. Neither human reason nor philosophy may justly oppose revelation; nor assume equal authority on the subject of religion. It is true, the Deity addresses us as intelligent, rational beings; and we should exercise our reason, as before suggested, in judging of the evidences and claims of a system proposed to us as divine; as of the Christian and Mohammedan. And in forming an opinion, the internal evidence is not to be disregarded. It is justly considered of great weight. The sublimity and purity of the doctrines, their adaptation to our moral and spiritual wants, and the consoling hopes which it inspires—These considerations make a part of the evidence, and an essential part in favor of the Christian religion. But the evidence from miracles is also important, suitable, necessary. They prove the divine interference and sanction. They clearly indicate the finger, the power of God. The declaration of the Jewish ruler was alike reasonable and philosophical. “We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one could perform the miracles which thou dost except God were with him.” Here is a test not to be evaded nor invalidated. But the argument from reason alone may be objected to, or impugned—because what is asserted and plausibly urged, as the dictate of sound reason may have a great mixture of error, or mere conjecture. It may be so blended with imagination and with habits of



thought, arising from erroneous defective system of education, that much deception and mistake would be almost the certain result.

But when we exalt revelation and receive it, as of the highest authority and the only infallible standard of religious faith, reason need not be discarded nor neglected. "The reason of man is the inspiration of the Almighty"—"and the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord." Let the mental powers be duly appreciated; let them be fully exercised and developed; and let us ever listen to their directions to the greatest extent, so that they do not oppose revelation, nor lead us to reject that which it plainly declares as truth.

No true friends of man's intellectual elevation will be disposed to check the efforts, the meditations and aspirations of the human soul. If men were directed and governed by pure reason far more than they usually are, it would be for their true glory, for their greater improvement in a spiritual life. Perhaps, we may safely respond to the following sentiment of the contemplative Coleridge, "that the highest rationalism is synonymous with that spiritual-mindedness which the inspired apostle urges us to cherish and acquire." But let us also take with us, the opinion which he subjoins; and be careful lest we adopt "the Christianity of rationalism;" or make reason the authoritative standard, or the only source of our religious faith.

We should not exalt reason above revelation, nor make it the supreme and infallible oracle, when it is only an assistant, an inferior coadjutor on the high subject of religion. This would be setting the natural above the supernatural, if I may so speak; it would indeed, be a denial or a rejection of every thing supernatural. And this is precisely the mistake, the error, of some modern transcen-

dental speculatists in theology. They are anti-supernaturalists. Whilst they boast of reason, and listen to the suggestions of their own minds under the name of reason, they impugn and disregard all that is supernatural—in other words, they deny a special divine revelation. Every one indeed has what he calls a revelation of his own—made to, or arising in his own individual mind—His own soul is the author or source of all the light he desires. He therefore admits no other source: and at the same time it is contended—consistently, perhaps with this strange theory—to be a more safe and sure guide than the recorded teaching of the special Messenger of the Deity.

In speaking of the benefits of good learning to Christianity, it should not be confounded with *reason*. Because the boasted reason of man may be perverted, and thus lead astray, we may not therefore, depreciate human learning. Neither, indeed, can be justly placed in opposition to Christianity: But while the one tends to confirm, and is capable of furnishing evidence in favor of the Christian revelation; the other may become hostile to it, by the indulgence of extravagant speculations, and conduct its deluded votaries into the regions of doubt, and perchance of infidelity.

There is no danger, perhaps, that a man should be too transcendental or spiritual in his views and aspiration, so that he be not induced to run counter to the sober dictates of unperverted reason, nor to the plain doctrines of revelation, nor to the statements of authentic history. Yet imagination, taking the name of reason, *may* be so indulged, as to destroy, or undermine all that is certain and decisive in theology—while sound learning will show us, that many, in past ages, as well as at the present time, claiming to have discovered and explored new regions of intellect, and of the spiritual world, have but wandered in the land of shadows, where they cannot distinguish truth from false-



hood, nor perceive what is in the distant future, immortality or annihilation. They are in similar doubts with the celebrated pagan Roman Orator, when he said—*Nec enim, dum ero, angar alla re, quum omni vacem culpa ; et, si non ero, sensu omnino carebo.* The history of past systems of human philosophy relating both to psychology and ethics, will convince us of the lamentable errors and absurdities into which speculative men have sometimes fallen—Unacquainted with, or departing from the solid ground of revelation, they have not been able to find a resting place for their hopes, on the wide waste of waters where they have ventured and by which they were surrounded. Look into the systems of Pythagoros, Socrates, Plato, Lucretius, and other eminent philosophers among the ancients; and of Spinoza, of Hobbes, of Rousseau, and of Hume, in modern times; and you will find they teach nothing satisfactory, and advance no strong evidence in support of their theories; but leave all in conjecture and doubt.

It appears to be the tendency, and is sometimes the effect, of following reason as the only guide, to lead us to reject or to undervalue the supernatural testimony which has been given in favor of revelation. This is the error of the transcendental philosophy of the present day. The reason and the internal consciousness are supposed to be a sufficient authority and guide in theology, and thus occasion is given for the charge, by the skeptic and the worldly, that the miraculous part of Christianity is not genuine; and therefore, that its founder and his disciples—this is the implication—were in fact none other than impostors; as they really were, if they unjustly claimed a power to perform supernatural works in proof of their divine mission, and of their authority to declare new and important truths to the world; thus placing the opinions and doctrines of Christ on a level with those of sages and philosophers, who had

only the teachings of reason to enlighten them. On this supposition, the declarations and sayings of our Saviour have just the weight or authority as those of Socrates, of Plato, of Seneca, of Confucius, of Fenelon, or of Franklin, and no more. Their opinions and advice, so far as they appear reasonable and wise we are bound to follow. But they made no discoveries respecting the nature of Deity or the future destiny of man; and, as they spake without divine authority, they may be obeyed only in so far as every individual may deem proper or prudent.

The conservative principle, with some qualifications, perhaps, is as important in religion as in politics. There are and always have been some great principles, never questioned by thinking men—such as the moral character of God, and the accountability of man—these are confirmed by the Christian revelation, and others added equally important; and these must be held sacred and permanent, however men may speculate on minor subjects. As intelligent and reasonable beings, we need doctrines concerning the human soul, and the destiny of man, and the character of the Deity, which were delivered by divine authority, and have received the direct and unequivocal sanction of heaven.

The question then returns, whether we shall follow blind, or fallible, or evidently defective teachers, when we have the recorded instructions and declarations of those who gave evidence, that, in addition to the intellectual strength imparted by reason, they had divine illuminations to constitute them able and sufficient guides in religion. In a word, the alternative now before the Christian world is, the admission of the divine origin and authority of the Gospel; or systems of human invention under the imposing name of philosophy, and to which the doctrines of revelation must yield, and by which they must be judged. But



who would prefer the feeble glimmering light of the moon or the stars to guide him in his lonely way, when he might have the clear and bright shining of the meridian sun? Who will be satisfied with the waters of Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus—pleasant as they may be—when they may be supplied with living waters, flowing from the perennial fountain which stands by the mount of God?

It may be expected that I should refer to natural religion. But the time will allow me only to glance at the subject; nor is the consideration of it necessarily connected with the object I have proposed to myself in this address. It is against revealed religion, that infidels and skeptics generally make objections; and it is the province of good learning to show their weakness or irrelevancy. To remove all objections raised against natural religion would also require me to enter the department of the physical sciences. It may be sufficient, then, to observe, that human learning furnishes a knowledge of events, from ancient history, which serve to obviate many difficulties which sometimes perplex the minds of the illiterate, by showing, that, in the early ages of the world, a portion of mankind believed in the divine unity, in opposition both to atheism and to polytheism, and in the moral attributes of the Deity, by presenting arguments in favor of a superintending Providence, from the various fortunes and conditions of different nations in former periods.

When the infidel asserts that the world is eternal, or supposes that men were originally destitute of reason, differing in no degree from other animals; or that they sprung up, like mushrooms from the fertile banks of the Nile, the learned scholar, if such opinions are not too absurd to merit a grave reply, is prepared to show that this globe is com-

paratively of recent date in its present form; that from the beginning men had a rational nature; that matter being essentially inactive, a Being of infinite intelligence and power must have at first formed, and does still sustain and govern the world.

Men of skeptical minds are ever ingenious and busy in making objections both to natural and revealed religion. And their skeptical and sometimes plausible theories should be met and answered by the Christian scholar. Where the morals, the welfare, and the hopes of mankind are jeopardized by the attacks and cavils of unbelievers, it becomes the solemn duty of the religious part of the community whose literary advantages have been such as to qualify them for the task, to expose the errors and fallacies which may be spread abroad in society. The liberally educated, whether of the clergy or laity, are bound to take a part in defence of the Christian religion and its institutions on all proper occasions. We cannot discharge our duty to our friends or to society but by a faithful use of our acquired talents in the cause of virtue and morality. The sons of Bowdoin College have high responsibilities resting upon them for their support to all that is sacred in religion and valuable in morals. There is a wide field for your exertions. The harvest is extensive, and though the laborers are not few, they have great and useful service to perform.

My brethren of the *Φ. B. K.*, whether sons of Bowdoin, or of Harvard, or of Yale, or of Brown, or of Dartmouth—and of all these there are some probably now present—our literary privileges were not intended merely for our personal benefit and gratification. We owe much to our generation; to civil society of which we are members. So far as we have acquired a knowledge of useful and important truths, or become qualified to defend religion from infidel



attacks, we should communicate with and assist others, that they may share with us in the advantages arising from a liberal education.

If knowledge does not *always* lead to virtue, if all men are not useful as they are enlightened, it is the *natural* tendency of good learning to improve human society. And we have abundant evidence, that without the means of learning among a people, they cannot long preserve either their morals or their liberty. The fairest portion of our species, and the young of both sexes, who are in danger of being corrupted or led into pernicious errors, by books of fiction and romance—too much perused at the present day—may be benefitted by the instruction and arguments of the well educated Christian. And what satisfaction must it be to the truly benevolent to furnish an antidote to the poison of skeptical and of licentious theories, and to pour into their tender and susceptible minds the rich consolations and glorious hopes of the Gospel.

In the regular religious teacher learning is especially important. An illiterate clergy is a great evil to any community. They are set for the defence of religion and good morals. “The priest’s lips should keep knowledge.” While they are exemplary in conduct and teachers of sobriety and righteousness to the many, they should be able to convince those who openly oppose the truth, and to put to silence the vain surmises of wicked and ignorant men.

I fear the patience of my respected auditors, as well as my own strength, is nearly exhausted. But I beg to draw on your kind indulgence a few moments more; and to refer briefly to the past and present condition of this part of the country, in a moral and literary aspect. A great change has occurred within half a century; and it is highly favorable to the character of the people as to the means of education and learning. Forty-eight years ago, I became

a resident in this vicinity—only six well educated ministers of the gospel were then to be found in the whole territory east and north of the county of Cumberland. The teachers of youth also, were comparatively few, and many of them lamentably deficient, both as to proper literary qualifications and habits of strict morality.

The first Academy in the whole District, that at Hallowell, was not opened till after the period to which I refer. That at Berwick was established soon after. Now, the means of learning are as liberal and extensive as in the parent State. The regular, and educated clergy have greatly increased; and where there were but six, there are at present sixty, probably more. This literary Institution, though but recently established, is in a very prosperous condition. It is difficult to estimate the benefits resulting from it to the State, both as to the interests of religion and letters. It has answered the best hopes of its early friends and patrons, and the *few* who remain are fully rewarded for all their attention and labor, in bringing it into full operation. For eight or ten years from the date of the act of incorporation they devoted much time to prepare the institution for receiving students and supporting instructors. In 1806, the year of the first commencement, it was truly “a day of small things.” Its funds were small and almost unproductive: for wild lands were not then easily converted into money—But patience and perseverance had almost their perfect work. And by the wisdom, prudence and moral worth of the two first Presidents—of the third I am not able to speak from personal knowledge—with zealous, co-operating aid of other friends of learning, the College has prospered far beyond the early expectations of the community—Those early friends and patrons of the Institution are departed, to their glorious reward, we trust, on high. One of its valued and faithful friends has been



called away from his earthly labors since your last anniversary.

The present prospects of the College are such as to afford its friends the most cheering hopes of its future usefulness. I doubt not that it has the best wishes and will command the zealous services of the members of this literary society, whether they all can call it *Alma Mater*, or have received the privilege of a liberal education in some other Seminary in the land, but are now citizens of this section of the nation.

Permit an elder brother to admonish you to be faithful to your happy privileges. Your literary labors should not terminate with your collegiate life. Only the *foundation* has been here laid. Whatever may be your professional employment to obtain a respectable standing in the world, you will find much leisure for literary pursuits.

As you are citizens of a free government, it may justly be expected, that you give much of your time to political subjects and concerns—for different opinions and parties will undoubtedly continue to exist in our Republic. And as freedom of enquiry on religious subjects is fully indulged, there will probably be found different sentiments and views on some speculative points in theology. But these considerations should not prevent united efforts to promote the interests of good learning, as well as to support the essential truths of our common Christianity. In the great Republic of letters there should be no sectarian views; but a union of effort and of purpose to further the cause of literature and truth. And so long as your inquiries and studies are impartially directed to the search after truth, physiological or psychological, you cannot fail to contribute something to the stock of useful and general knowledge, and to the enlightenment of your fellow men.

Were we permitted to lift the veil which hides future

years from our view, we should probably be strengthened in our present confident anticipations respecting the increase and the improvements of this part of the country. The indications are already numerous, as to the advancement of Maine, not only in population, in enterprise, and in wealth, but in useful learning, the necessary support of individual and social happiness. This hallowed Seminary is rapidly rising in reputation and usefulness. Already has a powerful influence gone forth from its walls for good, both for the intelligence and piety of the people. And it is devoutly hoped that it will long continue a rich blessing to the State, by spreading useful learning through the whole length and breadth of the Commonwealth; that it will increase the desire for sound science, and thus prove, as was originally designed, an efficient aid to the precious interests, both of religion and literature.



## NOTES

TO EXPLAIN AND CONFIRM SOME STATEMENTS IN THE ADDRESS,  
WHICH WAS PREPARED AT SHORT NOTICE.



*Page 4th, 8th line.*—The object of the Society, as expressed in its constitution, is the promotion of literature, and of friendly intercourse among scholars. Its motto is intended to indicate, “that philosophy, including therein religion as well as ethics, is worthy of cultivation, as the guide of life.”

*Page 5th, 9th line.*—As that of transubstantiation, the worship of the Virgin Mary, and prayers to other Saints, as mediators; and indulgences and pardons, by the Pope and his agents.

*See page 5th, 16th line.*—This is the distinguishing and peculiar doctrine of protestants—the sufficiency of the sacred Scriptures, and the recognition of them as the only decisive authority among Christians. Is this now duly considered by all who profess to be protestants?

*Page 7th, 8th line from bottom.*—The writings of the early Christians, which have been preserved, are worthy of careful perusal by all who would learn the religious opinions and views which prevailed in the second and third century.

*Page 8th, 12th line from bottom.*—On looking into the New Testament, the Catholic Bishop of Mentz said, “I never read this book before; and know not what book it is; but I perceive that it is altogether against us.”

*Page 10th.*—*Erasmus* hoped to effect a reformation in the Romish church, by argument and learning alone. He thought the light of truth would gradually dispel the clouds of error; and he had not the courage to suffer for the cause of the Gospel as *Luther* had. And with no bolder defenders, Christian truth would have still been hidden from the world.

*Page 12th, 8th line from bottom.*—Those parts of the national ecclesiastical system, established and imposed by the civil authority of England in the reign of Henry VIII. and of Elizabeth, to which the puritans objected, and for which, as these defects and impositions were not removed, many godly men separated from the Episcopal church, near the close of the 16th, and in the beginning of the 17th century, are noticed briefly by Gov. Bradford of Plymouth, in a MS. Volume, written by him in 1654; and found by me among the old papers which had been collected by Rev. T. Prince of Boston. The substance of the Volume may be found in the appendix to my history of Massachusetts, 1835. In this, and in *Prince's* chronology, in the history of Plymouth church, and other papers published in the Coll. of Mass. Hist. Society, the reasons are fully stated for the separation of *Robinson's* church, and others of that period, from the episcopal system established by law, under Elizabeth, and rigidly enforced.

The puritans considered some of the rites and forms, and some parts of the government and discipline of the English church of that period, grievous or improper additions to the discipline and form required or used in the primitive ages of the church; and as unfavorable to the interests of true religion. They differed in their views of duty in such a state of the church—some

chose to separate entirely from it, and others continued members, still seeking for a greater reform than had been made—In the short reign of Edward VI. the spirit of religious reform had great influence, and promised to effect much had he lived. Cranmer, Ridley, Hooper, Latimer, Taylor, Bradford, Rogers, and others, were alike learned and zealous. They were all martyrs for their stedfast adherence to Christian truth.

It is an inexcusable error in such characters as Macauley, in the *Edinburgh Review*, to say of the Puritans of the 16th and 17th century, “that they were unacquainted with the writings of the ancient philosophers, and that they regarded human learning with scorn and contempt.”

*Page 14th.*—After we had erected houses for God’s worship, one of the first things we looked after was to advance learning and preserve it to posterity; dreading to leave an *illiterate* ministry to the church when our present teachers shall be laid in the dust” “Yet did God raise up many to defend his truth, to be trained and tutored at the University.”—“In these latter days of his transformation into an angel of Light, has Satan endeavored to keep men from learning”—because it had been perverted by the friends of papacy and the hierarchy—“so that in the next generation they might be destitute of such helps as the Lord hath hitherto used as the *chief means* for the conversion of his people, and building them up in the holy faith, as well as for breaking down the kingdom of Antichrist.”—*Johnson’s Wonder-working Providence.*

*Page 14th.*—At one period of the church, he would have been deemed an infidel, or a heretic who knew any thing of Greek or Hebrew—“*Quanto eris melior grammaticus, tanto peior theologicus.*”

*Page 16th, 4th line.*—J. Q. Adams was first chosen to address the Society on this Anniversary; but public duties prevented his attendance. I ought to refer also to the archæological researches of Dr. E. Robinson, now of New York, in Judea and neighboring countries, lately published, which must be of great benefit to the student of sacred history—When will Mr. Norton’s second volume of the Genuineness of the New Testament appear?

*Page 17th, at top.*—And what we might justly ask, would have been the state and prospects of Christianity in New England, but for the writings and efforts of the Sons of Harvard, and Yale for a century and a century and a half past?

*Page 18th, at top.*—Sir Isaac Newton was a firm believer in the divine origin of Christianity; and wrote on the prophecies and on the chronology of the Old Testament, to the great elucidation of these subjects. It is also a recorded declaration of his,—“I find more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history whatever.” That very eminent scholar, the late professor Winthrop of Harvard University, gave his testimony, near the close of life, to the same purport: He said “he had searched the writings and theories of all the ancient philosophers; and they were all unsatisfactory—and that on the Christian religion only he could repose his hope of favor with God, and of an immortal state of being.”

The late Chief Justice Parsons said, “that the resurrection of Christ was susceptible of proof on the strict principles of legal evidence.” And the language of St. Paul is decisive. “If Christ be not risen, then we are false witnesses for God. Our preaching is vain. And the faith of Christians is vain.” St. Peter did not content him with advancing the holy doctrines of his Master, but insisted, as a fundamental truth, or fact, that Jesus had risen from the dead; and that he was approved of God, and therefore entitled to full spiritual authority, by the miracles and wonders, and signs which God did by him before the Jewish people. “And, indeed, *many other miracles* Jesus performed, in presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this Book: But these are recorded, THAT YE MAY BELIEVE, THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST—THE MESSIAH,—THE SON OF GOD.”—*St. John.*



*Page 20th.*—Cousin says—"C'est la Grece qui a donne la philosophie un genie humaine ; e'est donc en Gre'ce que commence l'histoire de la philosophie proprement dite et c'est la qu' il faut d'abord la chercher ; i'est la qu'elle a son enfance, ses tatonnemens et ses progress."—But the theories and opinions of the Greeks only served to show the insufficiency of human philosophy, both in theology and ethics. They were ever inquiring and speculating, but never came to the knowledge of the truth ; and the doctrines of the gospel are unspeakably superior to all their systems of vain philosophy. What were their vague notions and doubts and skepticism, at the most enlightened age of Greece, appears from the short notice in Acts XVII. Reason gives a hope and probability and some indications of the essential difference between mind and matter ; but by its highest efforts for more than two thousand years, it failed to give proof, or such evidence as to impart satisfaction, or justify a confident expectation of immortality. The importance of revelation, then must be admitted. And thus we perceive the unspeakable interest which every vile man must take in the question of the divine origin of Christianity. After extolling the wisdom and acquirements of the philosophy of Greece, Cousin still says—"Quand, donc, la philosophie remonte au de la de l'epoque ou elle est nee et s'enferme dans les origines de la pensee humaine, elle sort de son domaine proprement dit, et court le risque de se perdre dans de profondes tenebres."

*Pythagores* had travelled much and conversed with the philosophers of Asia—whether with the Jews is uncertain. And he taught that the soul was distinct from the body—was immaterial, and would survive it. But the doctrine of Metempsychosis, which he adopted, can afford little consolation to man. *Socrates* was the most correct in his views of all the ancient philosophers. But he was in doubt, and expressed a hope, that a divine messenger would be sent to enlighten the world. Plato, a disciple of Socrates, was less correct and settled in his opinions than his master. As a pagan, he has great merit ; but compared to an enlightened Christian, he was ignorant ; pitiably ignorant of the parental character of God, and destitute of a strong belief in the immortality of the soul. Who then will choose Plato rather than Jesus, or equally with him. And what, it may well be inquired, what did human reason and philosophy achieve, for the cause of moral and religious truth in the last century, in the enlightened nation of France, with the accumulated knowledge of three thousand years ? Nothing—absolutely nothing ; which satisfaction, or repose, or relief to our anxious minds, are the subjects of psychology or pneumatology ?

*Page 23d.*—Will they who hold to such an opinion adopt the language of the Roman philosopher—"Quam miseri animi essent—quod plerisque contingeret—tum Dei partem esse miseram ; quod fieri non potest. Cur autem quidquam ignararet animus hominis, si esset Deus ?"—When our minds are distressed, which is often the case, then a part of God is miserable. But this cannot be. And how can he be ignorant of any thing.

*Page 24th, 6th line.*—*Pythagoras*, preceded Socrates more than half a century—and he had travelled into several counties of Asia, as far as Chaldea, and probably India. He favored the doctrine of metempsychosis, which, while it implies the immateriality of the soul, and its survival of the dissolution of the body, gives little consolation ; as it supposes its continued existence in an irrational animal. *Socrates* was far more correct and rational—believing he should exist in another state, with all his mental powers and habits—should meet with the good who had died years before, when the virtuous would be happy and the bad miserable—but, perhaps, purified by their sufferings and fitted for happiness. His disciple *Plato* inclined rather to the opinion of *Pythagoras* ; but had great respect for Socrates, and has given as his views and sentiments shortly before he was put to death. By the aid of reason, with indirect light from the Jewish system, they had hope of a future existence, and were inclined to admit the imperishable nature of the mind. But by the highest efforts of reason they did not arrive at a settled faith in



immortality ; and of the paternal character of God, they had no adequate conceptions. Seeing so much present suffering, most of them were induced to deny or doubt the divine benignity. Generally, as their speculations were extended their doubts increased.

*Page 25th, 3d line from bottom.*—This is not an idle apprehension, nor an unjust intimation. The most startling doctrines have been lately advanced in this Christian community, and assertions expressly made which go to impugn the truth of the evangelical records, and place its representations on a level with mythological fables, never received with serious credence by intelligent heathens, though circulated among the ignorant. It is admitted that the sacred writers use metaphors and figures of speech, like other writers ; but they are meant and understood to be figurative—As when Christ calls himself a vine, a door, a shepherd, and bread from heaven—Peter a rock, on which he could build his church—But to deny the reality of the miraculous cure of the man born blind ; of feeding upwards of five thousand with five loaves and two fishes—of raising Lazarus—of giving immediate health and soundness to the diseased, the insane and the lame—and above all, of the resurrection of Christ—and all these must go together—To deny these miracles, to say it was a pretence, a trick, a delusion—what is this but to confound truth and falsehood—to represent the whole history as a cunningly-devised fable, as being founded in delusion or mere imagination.

*Page 26th, 6th line from bottom.*—Cousin may justly, perhaps, be deemed a firm theist, but his belief in a supernatural revelation is not so clear. His estimation of Christianity is similar to that held by Rousseau. Its morality is allowed to be good, and its author a fine and virtuous character—But its divine origin and authority are impugned, or doubted. Cousin is also opposed to the more gross and revolting theory of atheism and materialism. Yet he is evidently inclined to substitute reason for revelation. He would have us resort to the former, rather than to the latter, for moral and religious truth. This is the great defect of his theory. But has he any new argument, unknown to ancient heathen sages, to offer from reason alone, in favor of immortality, which renders sensible and full proof of its truth by revelation and miracles unnecessary ? or does he show from reason, that the Deity is propitious ? or does he obtain his belief in these doctrines—if indeed he has such faith—indirectly and unconsciously, from the light of the Gospel ? Some German philosophers would shield themselves under the theories of Locke, or Stuart. But they are no more assimilated, than the early gnostics to St. Paul—*Strauss*, a late German writer contends that human reason is adequate to discover every thing important in religion ; and is, therefore, opposed to all revelation, as unnecessary and useless. If *Strauss* is not an authority with transcendentalists, yet his opinion is adopted by them.

*Page 27th, 12th line from bottom.*—“The consequences of truth may be subversive of systems of superstition ; but can never be injurious to the rights or well-founded expectations of the human race. *We believe the Scriptures, and our hopes of eternal life are built on their truth* ; but we trust, that no faith can be acceptable to God, which is not grounded on reason ; and, as reasonable beings ! we may not entertain any hopes, the foundations of which may be shaken by the most rigid into the history of mankind.”—*Bishop Watson*.

*Page 29th.*—The two paragraphs on this page were briefly given in substance, but not precisely and fully in the language here used.

When among the open professors and able advocates of Christianity, we find such learned men as Origen, Eusebius, Jerome, Erasmus, Grotius, Lusaç, Newton, Milton, Locke, Boyle, Sir William Jones, Dugald Stuart ; surely those of only common learning should hesitate before they reject the Gospel, or refer it to human origin.

*Page 30th.*—The most ancient correct histories serve to confirm the account of Moses, as to the early settlement of the world after the deluge—the coun-



tries being settled in the following order. Chaldea or Assyria; from thence east to India and China; west to Syria or Canaan; south to Arabia, Ethiopia and Egypt; and west to Asia Minor and the northern and eastern parts of Europe. The languages of Chaldea, Arabia, Persia, Syria, and Egypt, have also great radical affinities. Some have pretended that the recent discoveries in geology militate with the Mosaic account of the deluge and the present formation of the earth. But nothing renders it improbable, that an extensive deluge occurred at a remote period: And this, although it produced a change in the relative position and extent of water and land, compared to the state previously to the flood, does not affect the question, whether the first formation of this globe was by means of water or fire; or the united influence of both.

*Page 33rd.*—It is a remarkable fact, that infidels and skeptics are generally disposed to depreciate human nature, and to represent man as wholly selfish or sensual, and only a little superior to brute animals. This charge cannot justly be made against the transcendental school. And yet, by rejecting revelation, or denying its divine authority, and its exclusive claim as a standard of theological truth, we are left to conjecture, or to our own reasonings and consciousness, and thus exposed to fatal errors; to skeptical doubts which place us in no better condition than the pagan world. If this opinion were adopted, the effect would be similar to that produced by the influence of the illiterate enthusiast. The former has the same precarious, fitful and fallible guide as the latter; and each renders its subjects the dupes of imagination and feeling.—The doctrine of the “New Lights” is nothing less than this—that every human being is inspired, or has such native spiritual power as to need no other revelation or knowledge than his own mind imparts. It denies that God has given any extraordinary truth to one, or to a few, for the benefit of others in religion—and therefore, that we have no standard even in the recorded doctrines or teachings of Christ and his apostles. Who does not see, that this is a denial of all supernatural revelation? And a rejection of a standard of essential theological truth, in consequence of which all is uncertain and transient? We may justly allow much to natural reason, on the subject of religion, without making it the sole or chief guide, or estimating it as a superior, or equal authority as revelation.—If the theories of past ages had been generally adopted, and the authority of Christ as a divine teacher not appealed to, as the only infallible standard and guide, there would now have been very little of true Christianity in the world. Happily, many have said in all ages since Christ appeared, “To whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life.”

*Page 35th, 36th.*—Omitted in the delivery, but previously prepared.

*Page 36.*—Mohammed had visited Judea, and was acquainted with both the Jewish and Christian writings, from which all that is valuable or correct in the Koran, was evidently borrowed: added to this, the corruptions of Christianity were then great, so as to disgust all intelligent men—Polytheism and idolatry in fact, prevailed in the Christian world; by the adoption of the Athanasian creed, and the regard and reverence paid to images of the Virgin Mary, and other Saints.

*Page 40th.*—It is often objected to the congregationalists or independents, by the members of both the Romish and the English established Churches, that they have no standard, no binding, decisive authority, as to their religious faith, or forms of worship. But it has been justly replied, that the written instructions and declarations of Christ and of his inspired apostles were received as a standard and rule: And that this was both more safe and more proper, than the decisions of Popes and Cardinals, or of Kings and Bishops. The puritans have, in truth, given more deference and regard to the authority of Christ, the *Revealer and Teacher* of our faith, than the Church of England or Rome. But there will now be great weight in the objection, if the plain truths and doctrines of the Gospel are to be judged and set aside by the vain con-



jectures and imaginations of speculative individuals. For then we shall have no standard to which we may appeal and ought to defer; to decide what are the true doctrines taught by him, "who has spoken to us from Heaven."—The Puritans, in England in 1650, and 1680, may be justly deemed conservatives. They aimed at no new metaphysical or philosophical theory hostile to the great principles and doctrines of all religion. They were indeed reformers; but their opposition was to the mere traditions and additions of men, which had no support in the sacred code. The chief aim and purpose of the Reformers in 1520, and of the Puritans, fifty years later, were to bring men back from error, and from vain ceremonies imposed by fallible men, to the simple forms used in the Church even in primitive times—Here was no speculation, or doubtful theory; but a return to the plain doctrines of the great Master, and to the purity of worship which he approved recommended. The charge against the puritans was a rejection of human authority and human impositions, and an acknowledgment of the authority of the Son of God. And this is *conservatism*, whatever the worldly may pretend or suppose: And essentially different from the theories and speculations of many of the present day, who reject or disregard revelation only so far it may agree with their individual consciousness, without reference to its divine authority.

*Page 45th.*—Hon. Prentiss Mellen of Portland, late chief Justice of Sup. Court in Maine.

**ERRATA.** The following typographical mistakes have been noticed, besides several in the punctuation—Page 30, near bottom, for *cautions* read *centuries*. Page 25, near top, for *regarding* read *disregarding*. Same page, eleventh line, for *and as*, read *that*. Page 20, 20th line, instead of *merits*, read *reveries*. Page 21, 18th line, read *spiritual* instead of *spirited*. Page 15, for *superior* read *spurious*.